AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #216

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: "Appa's Lost Days"

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As Broadcast Draft
September 27, 2006

ACT ONE

CHYRON: "FOUR WEEKS AGO..."

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

We pick up Appa's story from when we last saw him in episode 2.10, in the desert being taken by the Sandbenders as the ancient spirit library sinks. We revisit the same scene, but now from Appa's perspective... (NOTE: The scene is synchronized to the action from the script, so any changes that were made in the 2.10 storyboards need to be accounted for as well.)

Toph loses her grip on the sinking spire.

TOPH
No! Stop sinking!

The Sandbenders are fighting hard to get Appa. They circle him, bending the sand into a swirling fury. Appa sees Toph struggling to keep the library above ground...

TOPH (FROM 2.10) (CONT'D)
(bravado)
Don't make me put this down!

Working in perfect unison, like a well-oiled machine, they mount their attack. Sandbenders on one side of him toss tethers high up over Appa's back. (Appa tries shaking like a wet dog, but this effort proves futile.) The Sandbenders on the other side catch the tethers and run under Appa and in between his feet, wrapping him up. Appa hops from foot to foot trying to dodge them, but they are too quick for him.

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR HELP)

In a heartbeat Appa is girdled and hobbled. Now on his back, he tries in vain to wriggle from his bonds.

APPA (CONT'D)
(BELLOWS FOR HIS LIFE)

GHASHIUN
Put a muzzle on him!

She turns, releasing the library and delivering a hard, but sloppy blow at the Sandbenders. They barely flinch as they grab the loose end of a tether and pull, cinching Appa's feet together: now he's totally immobilized. Satisfied, they hitch Appa to their sand ships.

Appa looks to Toph -- she's his only hope, but he knows that Aang and the others are doomed if she doesn't keep the library up. Appa wants her to save THEM...

APPA
(BELLOWS)

Toph turns away from Appa and goes back to trying to save the library.

TOPH
(sotto)
I'm sorry, Appa.

Ghashiun and the Sandbenders vanish into the desert just as if they'd never been there. From where he lies bound, upside down, Appa sees Toph grow smaller and become obscured by a cloud of sandy dust, as he's rapidly spirited away.

APPA
(EXASPERATED SIGH, RESIGNED)

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE TRADING POST AT DESERT OUTPOST - LATER

As the ships skim over the desert, Ghashiun eyes Appa. The sand ships are slowed to a stop just outside the post. Ghashiun jumps from his ship.

GHASHIUN
Ransack his saddle. Who knows what treasures are stashed in there!

The Sandbenders approach Appa, who SNAPS at them.

APPA
(GROWLS)

The Sandbenders hesitate.

GHASHIUN
He's tied up good, he can't hurt you.

As the men raid his saddle, one Sandbender's long, flowing robe tickles Appa's nose. He SNEEZES violently, releasing a big spray of mucous and giving him just enough momentum to roll back over -- and creating a sand wave which crashes over one of the sand sailers, burying it. (This is the same abandoned ship the gang finds and uses later on.)

APPA
(SATISFIED SNORT)

Ghashiun surveys the damage.

SANDBENDER ONE
What's your father going to do when he finds out we lost a sand-sailer?!

GHASHIUN
Nothing... it's the one we stole from the Hami tribe. Did you empty the saddle?

Sandbender One hands Ghashiun a sack. Ghashiun dumps it upside-down. A few nuts, part of a game, a torn map, a sleeping bag, and Sokka's club fall out.

GHASHIUN (CONT'D)
That's it? Nothing but garbage!

Ghashiun kicks the crushed sand ship, then steps directly into the large booger Appa sneezed out.

GHASHIUN (CONT'D)
Gah!
(beat)
Doesn't matter. We'll still make a profit from selling him to those beetle-headed merchants.

EXT. DESERT TRADING POST - MOMENTS LATER

The Sandbenders arrive at the post. Appa sniffs the air, detecting more strange people.

APPA
(LOW, MENACING GROWL)

The traveling MERCHANTS watch the Sandbenders pull up with Appa in tow, and their eyes light up. (The odd head coverings they wear do indeed make them look like beetles.) Appa narrows his eyes as they come to inspect him.

A few of the Merchants roll out a large cargo vehicle -- a flat bed on skis with over-arching metal bars that come down to secure whatever's on the bed.

MERCHANT ONE
(to Ghashiun)
How's his temper?

GHASHIUN
Oh, pretty good--

APPA
(WARNING GROWL)

GHASHIUN
Most of the time.

MERCHANT TWO
(sotto, to Merchant One)
I bet someone will pay a fortune for him in Ba Sing Se.

MERCHANT ONE
All right. You've got a deal.

He gives Ghashiun a small box, which Ghashiun opens to reveal the coins inside. Ghashiun nods, taking it. The Merchants expertly load Appa (still tethered) onto the cart using rollers and a ramp. While the Merchants are busy securing Appa, he suddenly starts acting strangely.

EXT. DESERT SKY - DAY

(Use the exact, actual shots from 2.11!)

Aang flies over the desert, searching desperately for any signs of Appa's trail. He blows the bison whistle.

AANG (FROM 2.11)
Appa! Appa!

EXT. DESERT TRADING POST - MOMENTS LATER

APPA
(UNUSUAL YELPING/WHINING SOUND)

Before the deal can sour, the Sandbenders take the money and speed off.

GHASHIUN (O.S.)
He's your problem now!

MERCHANT TWO
What--?

All eyes turn to Appa who is sniffing the air and trembling: he's sensed something. Aang is searching for him! (He can hear the bison whistle -- CLOSE ON APPA, we can hear his audio P.O.V. of the SHRILL WHISTLE.)

EXT. DESERT - THAT MOMENT

Back on the Merchants' cart, Appa goes wild.

APPA
(FRANTIC RESPONSE TO AANG'S WHISTLE)

He BUCKS, and ROCKS the cart from side to side, snapping the tethers that bind him, and finally getting a foot free! With the cart still attached to him, he manages to HOVER above the ground a few feet, and skids along. It's trading post chaos! Appa tosses the Merchants about like rag dolls at the ends of his tethers.

MERCHANTS
Whoooah!

MERCHANT ONE
We need the Shirshu-spit darts!

MERCHANT TWO
Got 'em!

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR AANG)

Appa rages. MERCHANT TWO gets into position and loads some hair's-breadth-thin blow-darts into a bamboo tube.

MERCHANT TWO
Okay, big fella, you're gonna take a nice little snoozle.

He blows the barely visible darts at Appa's large hindquarter. At first there is barely any change, but gradually the poison begins to take effect: Appa slows down, his thrashing gets sloppy, he shakes his head, trying to clear his FUZZY VISION, and falls. He makes an heroic and surprising attempt to get up. The Merchants jump back.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT SKY - SIMULTANEOUS

(Exact scenes from 2.11) Aang lands and searches the ground for tracks. Nothing. He stands up and looks around. Empty desert in all directions. Aang's lower lip trembles.

AANG (FROM 2.11)
Appa.
(beat)
No! Nooo!

He winds up in frustration, jumps into the air, and strikes the sandy earth with a massive, angry Airbending strike.

EXT. DESERT - THAT MOMENT

As Appa FADES from the Shirshu toxin, he can see the mushroom cloud in the distance.

APPA
(GROGGY GROAN)

MERCHANT ONE
We've got to get rid of this one. He's too much trouble.

MERCHANT TWO
We could sell him for parts...

From Appa's P.O.V. as he BLACKS OUT and collapses...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CIRCUS ANIMAL TRAINING TENT - NIGHT

(NOTE: This is Ty Lee's circus from 2.03.)

Appa COMES TO on a bed of hay. He opens and closes his eyes a few times to see two identical, blurry men gently stroking his head through the bars of a cage. The blurry men become one man.

TRAINER
(soft)
Aww, I understand you've had a rather hard time lately. That's too bad. You probably felt you had no choice but to behave outrageously, like a wild animal. But don't worry, you won't anymore.
(menacing)
Because I am going to break you...

Off Appa's reaction...

CUT TO:

INT. CIRCUS ANIMAL TRAINING TENT - LATER

The trainer feeds a nearby caged platypus bear. He watches Appa salivate. Appa steps forward and realizes for the first time that his feet are CHAINED TOGETHER.

APPA
(ANXIOUS MOAN)

The trainer approaches Appa's cage pushing a wheelbarrow of food. He stops short of Appa's reach.

TRAINER
Hungry? Don't worry, I'm going to feed you too.
(beat)
But not yet. First I'm going to show you how you'll earn it.

The trainer releases a decrepit-looking vulture-lion who begins a flying routine through a series of increasingly smaller hoops. It stops in between to balance on one foot atop increasingly thinner high posts.

During this time the trainer turns his back to Appa to make sure the vulture-lion demonstrates the trick properly. Appa takes advantage of the situation and uses his huge breath to help himself to dinner by SUCKING the nearby food towards him. Appa MUNCHES as he watches the vulture-lion approach the last (very small) hoop as if he were about to pass through it, but instead, take it in his teeth. He flies with it a moment before dropping the hoop down to the trainer, who catches it.

TRAINER (CONT'D)
(still not looking at Appa)
Of course when <u>you</u> perform, the hoops will be flaming. And, if you are careful, you won't get burned--

APPA
(LOUD BELCH)

The trainer turns and discovers Appa's eaten the food. He's been outwitted!

TRAINER
(sadistic)
You're about to be sorry.

Appa swallows the mouthful he's eating, but when he leans over to take another bite, the trainer calmly LIGHTS the rest of the food on fire. Appa JERKS away from the flaming food, and begins to SLAM around in his cage in rage and fear.

APPA
(OUTRAGED BELLOWS)

The trainer deftly heats up the bars of the cage to RED-HOT, thus manipulating Appa into staying perfectly still -- if Appa touches the bars, he will be burned.

TRAINER
It's obvious that whoever your previous owner was, he had no idea how to handle you properly.

He leaves Appa BREATHING HARD and glaring at him.

EXT. OUTSIDE CIRCUS BIG TOP - DAYS LATER - NIGHT

A crowd files up to the tent entrance. Nearby, animals, including Appa, are caged. Appa watches a MEAN FATHER and his son, YAN, approach him.

MEAN FATHER
I'm gonna go get a bag of sizzle-crisps. Stay here and stay away from that monster--
(terrifyingly severe)
Behave yourself, or you'll regret it.

Yan waits until his father's out of sight. He notices Appa is trying to get some food just out reach of the bars of the cage. Yan cautiously goes to help him, but as he gets closer, he finds the trainer arguing with the CIRCUS MASTER (The same as in episode 2.03.) Yan improvises a hiding place and eavesdrops.

TRAINER
He's a difficult creature, stubborn and willful. I need more time with him -- it's too risky right now.

CIRCUS MASTER
Too risky?! What are you talking about? This is the circus: home of fear and danger. I want the wind buffalo to perform <u>tonight</u>!

The circus master leaves and the trainer leans toward Appa.

TRAINER
(terrifyingly severe)
If you don't behave yourself, you'll regret it!

Yan looks at Appa sympathetically, and smiles -- there's a connection as they look at each other. Suddenly, an arm yanks Yan out of frame.

MEAN FATHER
Let's go.

Yan follows him, but he looks back at Appa.

YAN
(a la Aang)
See ya later, buddy.

Yan's father drags him away. Appa sadly watches him go.

INT. CIRCUS BIG TOP - NIGHT

Clowns juggle, acrobats do tricks, etc. The circus master takes center stage to a drum roll.

CIRCUS MASTER
Ladies and gentlemen...

The tent suddenly goes black. The crowd OOOH'S. The trainer bends some fire, revealing a huge, lumbering animal in silhouette. AWED OOHS -- what can it be?

CIRCUS MASTER (CONT'D)
Now for something truly special -- a noble beast so magnificent and rare it hasn't been seen by human eyes in generations. I give you... the wind buffalo!

The lights go back up and we see -- Appa dressed up like a clown: his face is made up and he wears a gigantic pink tutu around his gigantic middle. It's clear he feels self-conscious and ridiculous. The crowd LAUGHS RIOTOUSLY.

TRAINER
(to Appa)
Up.

Appa looks around, dazed. He scratches at the tutu with a back foot. The crowd CHUCKLES.

TRAINER (CONT'D)
(to Appa)
Up, you insolent cow.

Appa tries to bite the tutu, which causes him to go round in a circle. The crowd is HYSTERICAL. The exasperated trainer bends a huge blast of fire, singing Appa's fur.

APPA
(ALARMED YELP)

YAN
(to Appa, from audience)
Run away! Get away from him!

Appa, terrified by the flames and sufficiently cowed, REARS up on his back feet, then he keeps on going up into the air! The surprised crowd APPLAUDS. Appa FLIES through the first flaming hoop, then he approaches a pole and descends; landing on top of it doing a handstand on the pole with one foot -- it's very tricky! The crowd AHHS. Appa keeps going.

Finally, Appa approaches the too-small hoop at top speed. The crowd GASPS. Yan hides his eyes, then peeks out behind his fingers. At the last second, Appa blows on the flaming hoop, extinguishing the flames, and takes the hoop in his teeth -- but it's still hot!

APPA
(STARTLED YELP)

He drops the hoop prematurely. The trainer runs to catch it, but it BEANS him, knocking his hat off -- the hot hoop catches his hat on fire, and he has to stamp on it to put out the flames. Struggling to regain control, he puts the hat back on and takes a bow -- the awkwardly crushed hat SMOKES and SMOLDERS and looks ridiculous. The crowd LAUGHS UPROARIOUSLY. For Appa, for just a moment, it's as if the rest of the crowd's been completely silenced: all he can hear is YAN'S LAUGHTER -- and HE SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE AANG!

YAN
(AANG'S LAUGHTER)

Appa takes a fresh look around: this is the circus -- he doesn't belong here! While everyone is distracted, Appa searches for an exit. He looks up. Through a hole in the top of the tent, he sees the night sky. He looks at Yan, and Yan looks directly at Appa -- we sense their connection again, and again it's as if everything else is silent and slo-motion and Yan is the only one talking.

YAN (CONT'D)
(to Appa)
Go! You can do it.

Appa speeds toward the top of the tent. Below, the trainer sees Appa getting away. He sends fire blasts up after him.

TRAINER
(uncharacteristic yelling)
Get back here, you stupid beast!

Appa rockets through the hole, but it catches around his middle. For just a moment, he flies with the circus tent around him, but then it rips free, taking the pink tutu with it. The tent billows down.

CROWD (O.S.)
OHHH! AAHH!

Appa, finally free, except for the chains attached to his feet, and the smears of clown make-up on his face, flies triumphantly into the night sky in search of Aang.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. AIRSPACE NEAR LIBRARY SINKHOLE - MORNING

Appa approaches the spot where he last saw Aang. He lands near the sink hole/shallow crater the library made when it went down. He SNIFFS the air, and begins to follow his nose to the center of the crater. He smells the sand and lifts a foot to try to dig a little, but his chain goes taught.

APPA
(FRUSTRATED GROAN)

He awkwardly lies down in the sand and puts his head on his paws. He looks very, very sad.

APPA (CONT'D)
(MOURNFUL SIGH)

EXT. DESERT AIRSPACE - DAY

Appa flies low over the desert floor searching for Aang. Below him he watches a horned gila monster (gilacorn!) trying to roll an egg into its hole. A jackalope eats a spiny cactus flower. Appa's giant stomach GROWLS loudly.

APPA
(BELLOWS IN AGREEMENT)

EXT. DESERT AIRSPACE NEAR BUZZARD WASPS' MUD HIVE - DAY

Appa sniffs the air, and begins to follow an enticing smell. His nose leads him closer and closer to the doorway of the oddly-shaped mud hive (which we recognize as belonging to the buzzard-wasps.)

Appa flies in.

APPA (O.S.)
(LICKING/HONEY GUZZLING SOUNDS)

BUZZARD-WASPS (O.S.)
(ANGRY HUMMING GROWING LOUDER)

Appa barrels out of the hive, his muzzle dripping with honey.

APPA
(YELPING THROUGH HONEY)

Angry buzzard-wasps pursue him. Appa SWOOPS, DIVES and ROLLS trying to shake them. Two wasps who try to follow his moves COLLIDE. Another CRASHES into the desert floor. One by one the other wasps give up the chase. Exhausted, Appa lands.

APPA (CONT'D)
(PANTING)

On the sand, Appa ROLLS around trying to lick off the honey in his fur, but dirt, sand and even tumbleweeds get stuck all over him. The more he tries to get clean, the dirtier he gets. He gets a mouthful of sticky sand.

APPA (CONT'D)
(NASTY RETCHING)

The sun glares down. Appa's a hot, sticky, miserable mess.

APPA (CONT'D)
(DISGUSTED SNORT)

EXT. AIRSPACE NEAR FARM - EVENING

The sun is setting as Appa flies, looking for a place to rest. He's tired and beginning to look matted and wild. He spots a small farm below. A barn catches his eye. There's no one in sight. He swoops down.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Appa pokes his head into the barn. It's warm and dry and full of hay. He helps himself to a few bales and a nearby bucket of water. Then he stretches out and falls asleep.

INT. APPA'S DREAM

In a pastel-colored dream, we see the Eastern Air Temple in an establishing shot. (NOTE: we need to establish a visual connection to Appa's real-life approach to the temple in act three.)

Appa is a cute little ball of fluff, surrounded by other sky bison pups -- who even though they are young are the size of large dogs. Suddenly there is HIGH-PITCHED MELODIC TWITTERING. Appa and the pups go spilling and wriggling through the air, as we reveal their mother descending. The mother bison bounds down to answer the bison whistle. The pups tumble/inexpertly fly after her.

Female Airbenders, the sisters of the Eastern Air Temple, are waiting for the sky bison with food and visitors -- young monks from the Southern Air Temple.

SISTER IIO
(to children)
Choose well! A sky bison is a companion for life.

The shadow of a small boy falls over Appa. Appa looks up into (younger) Aang's face -- before he got his arrow tattoos. Aang tries to scoop Appa up in his arms, but Appa is too large and playfully knocks him over.

AANG
(to Appa)
I guess this means we'll always be together!

Appa LICKS Aang's face. Aang playfully struggles with the giant tongue that is licking his face.

AANG (CONT'D)
(GIGGLES)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE SERPENT'S PASS

The location from 2.12, Aang's asleep... in his sleep, he playfully struggles just like in the dream.

AANG
(dreaming)
(GIGGLES)

Aang's giggling and struggling make it clear -- he's having the same dream as Appa!

AANG (CONT'D)
(still asleep)
Always...

He smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Appa 'smiles' in his sleep. Suddenly an angry FARMER appears out of nowhere, wildly WAVING a pitchfork.

FARMER
(FRIGHTENED YELL) It's some kind of monster!

Appa groggily stands. He looks around, bleary-eyed, and tries to avoid the farmers's jabs.

APPA
(CONFUSED GROGGY MOANING)

The Farmer's Wife peers in the doorway holding a torch so she can see what's happening. Appa sees the fire and freaks out!

APPA (CONT'D)
(PANICKED ROARS)

FARMER/WIFE
Ahhh!

Appa bashes himself into the sides of the barn in a desperate attempt to flee the flames. Holes appear in the walls. He flies up and smashes against the roof. Beams shatter and fall. Appa busts through a wall. The farmer and his wife run out of the barn just before it collapses, and Appa takes to the sky again.

EXT. AIRSPACE ABOVE SERPENT'S PASS - NIGHT

Appa flies above the pass, but rocky cliffs obscure his view of Aang and the campsite.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE SERPENT'S PASS - NIGHT

Aang is still asleep on the top of Serpent's Pass. Appa flies across the moon -- his shadow passes over Aang.

EXT. FERRY - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, a small ferry is crossing the lake. Zuko and Uncle are on deck. Uncle observes the heavens. He spots APPA in the night sky!

UNCLE
(GASP)

Zuko stirs in his sleep.

ZUKO
Uncle, what are you looking at? Is there something out there?

UNCLE
Uh... it's nothing, go back to sleep.

Zuko rolls over, and Uncle breathes a SIGH OF RELIEF.

EXT. AIRSPACE NEAR FOREST CAVE - NIGHT

Appa spots a cave below, circles down and lands. He sniffs the ground and begins rooting around for something to eat.

APPA
(SATISFIED SNORTS)

His ears prick up. He thinks he hears something. He stops and listens -- there's nothing. He goes back to eating.

He stops short again. Appa is PERFECTLY STILL -- but the sniffing and rooting sounds continue. The hair on his back goes up. There's someone else close by!

Before he knows what's hit him, Appa is in the midst of a terrible fight. A BOAR-Q-PINE has jumped him. They roll, scratching and biting viciously over the forest floor. They roll into a clearing where the boar-q-pine is illuminated for a moment. Appa sees his enemy and gets in a good shot: he bonks the boar-q-pine squarely with his horns.

BOAR-Q-PINE
(SCREAMS)

The boar-q-pine jumps off him and limps away. For a moment it seems as if Appa has won. But then the boar-q-pine stops and does a funny little waddle. Appa cranes his neck to see.

APPA
(CURIOUS NOISE: HUH?)

A split-second too late, Appa figures it out. He covers his muzzle as he's sprayed with a shower of quills which stick in his paws.

APPA (CONT'D)
(HOWLS)

Appa rolls over. He tries to yank out the quills with his teeth, but the chains make it impossible. He heaves himself half-way into the cave and passes out, overwhelmed.

EXT. MOUTH OF CAVE - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY, NIGHT, RAIN, SHINE

Appa waits in the cave. He's hurt, he's frightened, he's tired.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

SUKI, in her Kyoshi Warrior's uniform and make-up, is walking through the forest gathering breakfast along with KYOSHI WARRIOR #1. Kyoshi Warrior #1 grabs a handful of berries from a bush, but they're covered in long fur. She looks up and notices there are clumps of fur all over the place, and broken branches...

KYOSHI WARRIOR #1
Must have been some fight.

SUKI
Wait, let me see that.

Suki takes the clump of hair from her and looks at it curiously -- does she recognize it?

SUKI (CONT'D)
No... it couldn't be...

She follows the clumps around some rocks and bushes, and goes off following the trail.

EXT. CLEARING BEFORE MOUTH OF CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Suki follows the clumps to a clearing near a cave -- she sees a huge, hairy body lying half-way out of the mouth of the cave. She approaches cautiously, until she spots Appa's arrow.

SUKI
(GASPS) Appa? Oh, no.

Appa wakes, startled.

APPA
(FRIGHTENED, DEFENSIVE ROARS)

Still leery of humans, Appa reaches around and SNAPS at her. As he tries to SCOOCH backwards further into the cave to get away from her, Suki notices his chains and the quills in his feet. She realizes what she has to do and instantly changes her demeanor. She gets low and gathers some food for him as she speaks.

SUKI
(soothing)
It's going to be okay, Appa. I have to leave, but I'm going to be back soon with help.

She leaves the food at the mouth of the cave and runs off.

EXT. CLEARING BEFORE MOUTH OF CAVE - SOME TIME LATER

Suki leads her warriors to the clearing.

SUKI
(low)
No sudden movements.
(MORE)

SUKI (CONT'D)
He's been lost for a while and he looks like he's hurt -- he's shy around people and scared. Stay low and stay quiet.

KYOSHI WARRIOR #1
I can't believe you found the Avatar's bison -- didn't you just see the Avatar a few days ago?

SUKI
Yeah, so he can't be too far from here. It's our responsibility to get Appa back to him safely. This could be our most important mission yet.

The warriors gingerly approach Appa. He wakes from a nap, and is disoriented.

APPA
(STARTLED ROAR)

As he thrashes around, Suki signals everyone to give him some space.

SUKI
Give him some space!

They back off cautiously.

APPA
("THAT'S BETTER" SNORT)

SUKI
Appa, it's me, Suki. I'm a friend.

APPA
(CAUTIOUS AND MISTRUSTFUL SOUNDS)

SUKI
I want to help you. You're hurt... we can help you feel better.

She takes a careful step towards Appa, but he BRISTLES.

APPA
(SNORTS)

SUKI
And we can help you find Aang...

Hearing Aang's name, Appa visibly relaxes.

EXT. FOREST STREAM - DAY

The warriors have positioned Appa in the middle of a shallow stream. En masse, they bathe, manicure, and brush him all over. Appa is now free of his chains and quills, and his wounds are dressed. He looks considerably happier. Then...

APPA
(ALARMED GROWLS)

His hair stands on end. He struggles to his feet, and several warriors slide off his back. A crack of lightning splits a nearby tree in half, and out from the woods on the opposite shore, step Azula, Ty Lee and Mai! Azula CLUTCHES a handful of Appa's fur in her hand.

AZULA
(re: fur)
My, my you're easy to find... it's really astounding my brother hasn't captured you yet.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. FOREST STREAM - DAY

APPA
(FURIOUS ROAR AND SNARLING)

SUKI
What do you want with us?

Fans opened, Suki and the warriors take fighting stances, and Appa is ready to charge -- while Azula is characteristically cool.

AZULA
Who are you, the Avatar's fan girls?

TY LEE
Oh, I get it! Good one, Azula.

Azula glances over at Ty Lee -- the pun was not intended.

SUKI
If you're looking for the Avatar, you're out of luck.

MAI
(SIGHS) I knew this was a waste of time.

AZULA
No Avatar, huh? Well that's okay, any friend of the Avatar...

She unleashes a fire blast!

AZULA (CONT'D)
Is an enemy of mine.

Azula winds up for another attack, but Appa leaps in front of the warriors defensively.

Mai rolls her eyes, as the girls spring into action and clash bitterly with the warriors' fans and fighting skill. A thrilling battle on the muddy shore ensues. Ty Lee fights with her usual acrobatic flair, Mai uses her swords and throwing weapons, and Azula uses both fire and lightning.

Mai exchanges blows with one of the Kyoshi warriors.

MAI
You're so colorful it's making me nauseous.

Ty Lee uses her chi-blocking to bring an unsuspecting Kyoshi warrior to her knees.

TY LEE
You're not prettier than we are!

Appa does his part, fighting valiantly, but at Azula's first volley of fire, he's both enraged and terrified.

AZULA
Afraid of fire, I see. That's good, you should be.

Azula takes advantage of this and creates a ring of fire around him. Frightened out of his wits, he bucks and roars senselessly, putting himself in danger.

Suki fights her way to Appa. She throws mud from the stream onto part of the ring of fire, extinguishing it and providing an escape route.

SUKI
Go, Appa! Fly away from here!

Appa exits the ring, but he won't leave the battleground and continues to try to protect the warriors, who seem to have the lower hand in this battle. Suki grabs a burning tree branch. She waves it at Appa, and chases him.

SUKI (CONT'D)
Get out of here! You have to find Aang, we'll be okay!

Her plan works. Appa flees and takes off into the sky. But below him, Suki's attentions to Appa have distracted her: she is knocked off her feet by a leg-sweeping Firebending move from Azula. Suki climbs to her feet, and faces off with Azula directly. Suki BRANDISHES her fans.

AZULA
Don't you know fans just make flames stronger?

Azula unleashes an especially bright and fiery attack... things don't look good for the warriors.

EXT. SKY - EVENING

Appa flies through clouds, rain, fog...

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Despite strong winds, Appa flies with determination over an ocean. Below, he sees a group of swift Water Tribe boats deftly taking out a large Fire Navy ship. We see the leader of one of the boats, who we might recognize from 1.15 as HAKODA, Katara and Sokka's father! (Beside him is BATO, perhaps, now healed?)

EXT. SKY - DAWN

Appa is still flying, but now it's a tremendous effort. Suddenly in the distance appears... the Eastern Air Temple.

EXT. COURTYARD OF STABLES - EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - DAWN

Appa touches down in a courtyard. Limping slightly, he wanders into the temple's expansive stables. (Though the temple looks and feels empty, it's not completely falling into ruin, or overgrown.)

INT. HAY BARN OF STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Appa wanders into the (empty) hay barn of the stable. He has a...

FLASHBACK

...to the barn overflowing with hay. He and his brothers and sisters rough-house.

INT. STABLES - BACK TO PRESENT

Appa wanders down a corridor of stalls. He stops and SNIFFS at one. He goes in and looks around. He finds a low wooden bar that's worn down and thinner in the middle. He has another...

FLASHBACK

There's a funny GRINDING/RUBBING SOUND. A large sky bison -- Appa's mother -- looks up from her snooze. She sees Appa, a small puppy, teething on the wooden bar. (We see that Appa doesn't have all his teeth yet.)

INT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - BACK TO PRESENT

Appa wanders onto a large, porch which faces the now-rising sun. There, sitting in a meditative lotus position, is a small, bald figure in silhouette -- Aang!

APPA
(DELIGHTED YELP)

GURU
Hello. I am Guru Pathik.

Appa bounds over, bowls the figure over and begins playfully licking and pawing it, until he realizes: it isn't Aang.

APPA
(STARTLED WHIMPER)

He stops and observes -- a one hundred and forty year old GURU. Appa starts back and SNAPS. Then he backs himself into a corner.

APPA (CONT'D)
(DEFENSIVE GROWLS)

The guru remains on the floor where Appa's left him -- he smiles and has a twinkle in his eye.

GURU
(utterly sympathetic)
I know I'm not the person you expected. And I didn't expect to be licked by a giant tongue just now -- the world is full of surprises.

APPA
(DISTRUSTFUL GROWL)

INT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - DAY

Neither Appa nor the guru have moved. The guru slowly lifts his head to check on Appa.

APPA
(SNARLS)

The guru patiently lowers his head back down to its original position.

INT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Still in their same places, the guru opens one eye.

APPA
(LOW GROWL)

The guru smiles and closes his eye.

INT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - NIGHT

Appa SNORES LOUDLY. The guru hops up from the floor: surprisingly nimble for his age. He walks silently over to Appa. HUMMING quietly to himself, he extends his palms and holds them a few inches from Appa's sleeping form, passing them over the air above him. Working down one side of his body, he "reads" his aura/chakras as he goes. He frowns.

GURU
Oh, dear... you've been through so much recently. Hurt and betrayed... so twisted up inside.

He stops and smiles.

GURU (CONT'D)
You're still full of love...

He looks concerned.

GURU (CONT'D)
(knowing sigh)
But fear has moved in where trust should be.

He goes around to Appa's other side.

GURU (CONT'D)
I've been expecting you and the young Avatar for quite a long time. I had a vision many years ago of helping him. That's why I came to the Eastern Air Temple.

Appa stirs in his sleep, dreaming of something unpleasant.

APPA
(SAD MOAN)

GURU
(sensing again)
Your emotions are so turbulent... like swirling stormclouds.

The guru rubs his hands together very quickly for a few seconds. He closes his eyes and gently places his hands over Appa's third eye. Appa instantly relaxes and stretches out.

APPA
(LOW PURRING)

GURU
Let the clouds in your mind be gentle, peaceful ones.

The guru removes his hands and tip-toes out of the room.

INT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - MORNING

Appa opens his eyes. Before him is a small pile of food. He looks around suspiciously, but he doesn't see the guru anywhere. He begins to SNIFF the food. Finally, he gives in to hunger and devours it. He looks up and sees more food in little piles. He gets up and begins following the trail of food, eating as he goes.

EXT. TEMPLE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Appa follows the food trail out into a beautiful garden. It's filled with all kinds of plants and animals. In the middle of the garden the guru is feeding the animals. It's obvious they trust him implicitly.

GURU
Someone looks very well rested --
(bows to Appa)
-- judging by your bed head.

Indeed, Appa's fur is cutely tousled and matted from his lengthy slumber. Appa finds a spot in the sun and settles into the garden.

EXT. EASTERN AIR TEMPLE - PORCH - SUNSET

The guru sits in a meditative pose, watching the moon rise. Appa wanders in. Eyes closed, the guru concentrates on his breathing. If he knows Appa's in the room, he's not letting on. Little by little Appa sidles up to him until he's close enough that he could touch him. Appa rolls onto his side.

APPA
(TIRED WHIMPER)

Eyes still closed, the guru reaches out and scratches Appa's tummy.

APPA (CONT'D)
(COMFORTED SIGH)

When Appa's totally relaxed, the guru opens his eyes and smiles. He produces a small scroll from his pocket.

GURU
I have prepared a message for Aang.
May I attach it to your horn?

APPA
(CONSENTING BELLOW)

Appa lowers his head, and the guru gently tethers it to him. Next the guru slowly walks around Appa, touching each chakra, and tracing lines between them with a "secret sword" hand position.

GURU
You and the Avatar's energies are mixed -- you have an unbreakable bond. By reading your energy, I can sense where Aang is.
(beat)
Funny what invisible strings connect us all.

Then the guru has a vision which should visually evoke the "connection visions" that the swamp monster taught Aang about in episode 2.04.

GURU (CONT'D)
I'll see you again, Great Beast.

Then he places his hand on Appa's third eye to share the vision with him. Appa begins having a vision:

INT. APPA'S VISION - DAY

An aerial view of Ba Sing Se. We see this vision sync up with...

EXT. OUTER WALL OF BA SING SE - NIGHT

Appa flies over the wall -- same aerial shot, but it's night now and Appa is actually flying there. A few Dai Li guards look up as they watch him pass by, and one points at Appa.

CUT TO:

EXT. BA SING SE - AIR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Appa continues circling, searching for Aang.

APPA
(BELLOWS)

Appa hears the BISON WHISTLE (audio P.O.V.!) -- he excitedly banks and turns.

APPA (CONT'D)
(HAPPY BELLOW)

Appa flies at great speed, like a happy dog bounding home to his master.

INT. BA SING SE - ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Appa lands, and looks around. He hears the WHISTLE again, and gets excited...

CUT TO:

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - SIMULTANEOUS

The WHISTLE continues over the scene. Aang lies fast asleep, his bison whistle by his side.

CUT TO:

INT. BA SING SE - ALLEYWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

The WHISTLING stops, as LONG FENG steps out of the shadows, and removes his own animal whistle from his lips. He smiles ominously.

Appa is spooked and rears back on his hind feet, stepping back into some mud, forming the footprint Momo finds in 2.15. But Long Feng Earthbends a giant hole in the ground, seizing Appa and swallowing him up into the ground -- he disappears along with Long Feng himself into the Earth...

APPA
(as he is swallowed up)
(BELLOWS)

Appa's bellow is CUT SHORT as the hole is closed up.

END OF SHOW